

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER  
LISTED

DEC 30 2009

## National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Independence Junior High School

other name/site number Independence Middle School

125 - 287

### 2. Location

street & town 300 West Locust Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Independence

N/A vicinity

state Kansas

code KS

county Montgomery

code 125

zip code 67301

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Patrick Zollner

Signature of certifying official/Title Patrick Zollner/Deputy SHPO

Date

11-18-09

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ( ☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the  
National Register

☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National  
Register.

☐ other, (explain):

Independence Junior High School  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, KS  
County and State

### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ private  
☒ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Historic Public Schools of Kansas

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

0

### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/School

### 7. Description

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVAL/Late Gothic Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	BRICK
	LIMESTONE
roof	ASPHALT
other	TERRA COTTA

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 7

Independence Junior High School  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, KS  
County and State

## 8. Description

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or grave.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property.

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1923-1959

### Significant Dates

1923

1939

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

### Architect/Builder

N. S. Spencer and Son Architects

Thomas W. Williamson and Company (Addition)

Brewster Brothers (Builder)

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 8

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

### Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☒ Other Name of repository:

Independence Public Library

☒ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 9

Independence Junior High School  
Name of Property

Montgomery County, KS  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.03 acres

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 11/5 2/5/9/5/7/2 4/1/2/3/6/4/1  
Zone Easting Northing

2 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

3 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

4 / / / / / / / / / / /  
Zone Easting Northing

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property.)

COUNTY CLKS SUB Out Lot 5; Section 30, Township 32, Range 16

Property Tax No.

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for the historic property includes the parcel of land associated with the resource

☐ See continuation sheet(s) for Section No. 10

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth Rosin, Principal, and Rachel Nugent, Associate  
organization Rosin Preservation, LLC date 24 August 2009  
street & number 215 W. 18<sup>th</sup> Street telephone 816-472-4950  
city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64108

## Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

**Maps** A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs:** Representative black and white photographs of the property.

**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

## Property Owner

name/title Independence, USD 446 c/o Chuck Schmidt, Superintendent of Schools  
street & number PO Drawer 487, 517 North Tenth telephone 620-332-1800  
city or town Independence state KS zip code 67301

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Independence Junior High School  
Montgomery County, Kansas  
Historic Public Schools of Kansas MPDF

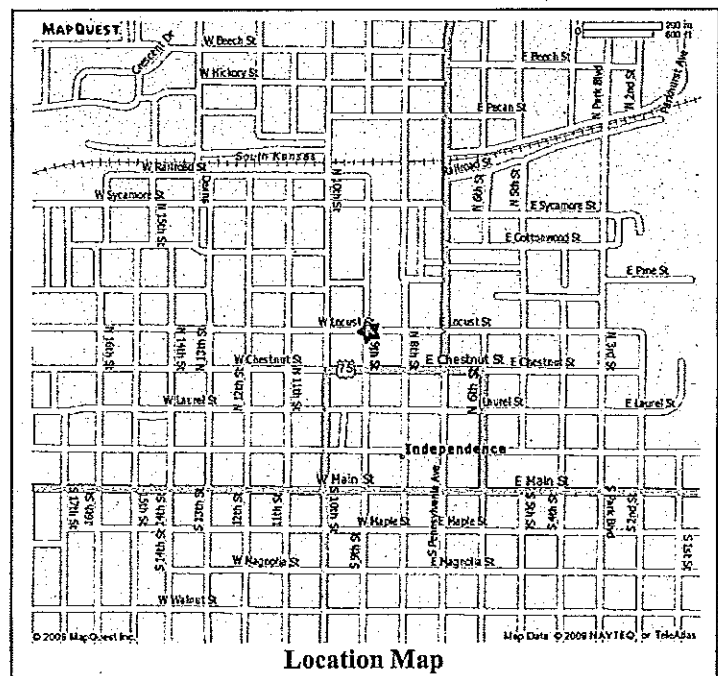
**SUMMARY**

The Independence Junior High School at 300 West Locust Street, Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas, is in a primarily residential neighborhood northwest of the downtown commercial center. The building sits on the north side of Locust Street and occupies the entire block bounded by 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> Streets and Locust and Pine Streets. The three-story brick building constructed in 1923 is E-shaped. The long east-west axis faces south toward Locust Street; the three perpendicular wings extend to the north. A square two-story gymnasium addition constructed in 1939 attaches to the north elevation of the center wing. Independence Junior High School's fireproof construction features brick walls and a concrete structure. In the large open spaces, such as the auditorium and the gymnasiums, steel beams or steel trusses support wood roof decks. The roof of the main building is flat while the 1939 gymnasium has a hip roof. The brick walls rest on a limestone base and have cream-colored terra cotta trim. Elements of the Late-Gothic Revival or Collegiate Gothic style include the crenellated parapet, pointed arch door openings, and the proliferation of quoins on every elevation. The symmetrical front (south) elevation contains a prominent central entrance. The massing, form, materials, and architectural and functional features of Independence Junior High School clearly illustrate the City High School property subtype described in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic Public Schools of Kansas." The building remains in use as a school facility. While it has experienced some alterations, primarily the replacement of many windows and doors, these changes do not diminish one's understanding of the building as a public school from the era of its construction. It maintains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

**ELABORATION**

**SETTING**

The Independence Junior High School property occupies the entire block north of Locust Street between 9<sup>th</sup> Street on the east and 10<sup>th</sup> Street on the west. The property is three blocks west of City Hall and several blocks northwest of the downtown commercial center. The adjacent property to the west, now vacant except for the small school district office building, once held the Montgomery County High School, built in 1899. The surrounding neighborhood was historically



*What is the construction date of this area?*  
*Does the style & age of the school fit into a similar time setting as these other buildings & areas mentioned? Other than distance, how are they related?*

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and remains a predominantly residential neighborhood filled with small one- and two-story single-family dwellings and a few scattered small one-story commercial buildings.

Independence Junior High School fronts Locust Street on a flat lot bounded by concrete sidewalks. The grade of the sidewalks and streets dips slightly lower than the grade of the lot along Locust Street and 9<sup>th</sup> Street, creating the need for a low painted concrete retaining wall on the south and east sides of the school property. There are asphalt parking lots on the east and west sides of the gymnasium addition. Concrete walks lead from the sidewalk to each entrance. The front walk intersects a large semi-circular concrete patio in front of the main entrance on the south elevation. The remainder of the property is grass and contains a few mature deciduous trees and shrubs.

**EXTERIOR**

Independence Junior High School is a three-story brick, E-shaped building with Collegiate Gothic ornamentation. The building was constructed in two phases. The main block, constructed in 1923, includes a long, three-story rectangular spine that runs east-west and three symmetrical wings that extend northward from the spine. The center wing is two stories and the flanking wings are three stories. The original building episode also included the one-story rectangular block attached to the north elevation of the center wing, which housed the indoor swimming pool. The two-story square block attached to the north elevation of the swimming pool structure was added in 1939.

Dark red brick walls rise from a Carthage limestone foundation.<sup>1</sup> Cream-colored terra cotta trim provides a strong contrast to the dark red brick and red mortar. Double terra cotta stringcourses encircle the building between the first and second stories and above the third story. Terra cotta quoins articulate every vertical change in plane on every elevation. The crenellated parapet contains terra cotta quoins and decorative panels as well as limestone coping.

The front (south) elevation of the main block is symmetrical around a prominent primary entrance. Fenestration and terra cotta quoins define bays on each elevation. Each bay contains either one or two pairs of windows at each story. The south elevation has ten bays; the east elevation has six bays, and the west elevation has eight bays. The north elevation of the east wing has one bay and the north elevation of the west wing has no fenestration. The secondary elevations of the east and west wings, specifically the elevations facing the courtyards between the wings, have no ornament to define bays. The windows on these walls have limestone sills.

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<sup>1</sup>"Junior High School Begins Operation Next Fall," *Independence High School Student*, 24 November 1922, Independence Public Library, vertical file – School History. Identifies foundation material as Carthage Limestone.

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The center wing has minimal ornament in the form of a single string course between the two stories. The side walls of the center wing have five second story bays on each of the east and west elevations. Engaged brick pilasters separate these bays. The paired windows have limestone sills.

The one-story swimming pool structure at the north end of the center wing has quoins and two string courses, but no windows, along its east and west elevations. This block has two sections. One section rests on a foundation of horizontal limestone blocks; it was part of the original 1923 building. The other section rests on a base of vertical terra cotta blocks and was part of the 1939 addition.

The 1939 gymnasium addition extends north from the swimming pool structure. The ornamentation on the gymnasium addition is a simplified version of the ornament on the 1923 building. The exterior walls are red brick with cream-colored terra cotta trim. Quoins articulate vertical changes in plane. Simple terra cotta beltcourses encircle the building above the first and third story windows. The crenellated parapet has limestone coping with a simplified level of detail than that on the 1923 building. Asphalt shingles cover the hipped roof. The east and west elevations are identical to each other with five bays on each elevation. Projecting from the north elevation is a rectangular block with five windows flanked by two recessed entries.

The primary entrance to the school is centered on the south elevation of the original building. A Gothic Revival tower projects slightly from the plane of the façade. A grand concrete stair with a flared, solid railing constructed of limestone blocks leads from the concrete patio to the one-story entry portico. Two full-height octagonal towers flank the tripartite entry. The towers have terra cotta quoins that articulate each vertical change in plane from the base through the crenellated terra cotta parapet. The upper two stories have narrow windows in the south elevation. Terra cotta clads the elaborate portico of the three-door entrance. Square rosettes ornament the three shallow pointed-arch openings. Inscribed nameplates above each door read "INDEPENDENCE," "HIGH SCHOOL," and "A.D. 1922" in Gothic script. The tall terra cotta parapet on the entry portico has three sections ornamented with blind tracery. As the entrance to the building leads to a landing between the first and second stories, the parapet obscures the second story of the main building wall. The third story contains five narrow windows surrounded by terra cotta trim. At the roofline, a tall terra cotta parapet similar to the parapet of the entry portico rises above the third story. This parapet also contains blind tracery.

The two entrances in the north elevation of the gymnasium are similar to the primary entrance. The limestone stairs leading up to the doors have solid railings composed of brick with limestone coping. Buttresses with terra cotta quoins flank the shallow pointed-arch openings. Each opening contains a set of double doors. There is simple blind tracery in the spandrels. The terra cotta nameplates above the doors read "PHYSICAL EDUCATION" in relief in a Gothic script. A crenellated parapet tops the entry blocks.

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There are two identical secondary entrances in the northeast and northwest corners of the main building at the junctures of the main spine with the wings. The terra cotta porticos have shallow pointed-arch openings inset with square rosettes. Terra cotta blocks fill the arches to accommodate rectangular doors. Low parapets contain blind tracery and blank shields.

There are several other tertiary entrances scattered around the building. Most have minimal terra cotta trim. All of the openings appear to be original, even though all of the exterior doors were replaced for life safety code reasons. The primary entry doors are aluminum single or double doors with tinted glass. Tinted glass transoms and sidelights fill gaps between original openings and replacement doors.

Almost all of the original multi-light double-hung wood sash windows were replaced with aluminum windows. A total of six original windows remain extant on secondary elevations. Aluminum replacement windows have three parts: the upper third is an opaque panel; the bottom two-thirds is a single-hung sash window with clear glass.

**INTERIOR**

The south spine and the east wing of the 1923 building retain their original configuration of double-loaded corridors flanked by classrooms and offices. The corridors also have their original terrazzo flooring with a double border of contrasting colors. Small, white ceramic tiles provide additional contrast in the border and serves to divide sections of terrazzo corridor. Groups of non-historic metal lockers are set into the walls lining the corridors. In some areas the corridors also have wood cubbies and benches recessed into the walls. Terrazzo wainscoting stops just below the upper trim on the lockers. The wall above the wainscoting is plaster. Ceilings are plaster with little or no trim.

A grand staircase leads from the landing at the front entry vestibule up to the second floor and down to the first floor. The main circulation stair is across the corridor opposite the grand entry stair. There are additional stairwells at the east and west ends of the main corridor and at the north end of the east wing. The finishes in the stairwells are similar to those in the corridors.

The classrooms and offices retain much of their original configurations and finishes. Classrooms on the first floor have exposed brick walls, while classrooms on the second and third floors have plaster walls. Ceilings are plaster, although some classrooms have non-historic suspended ceiling grids with lay-in tiles. Carpet and linoleum tile cover the concrete floors. Steam radiators line the exterior walls beneath the windows. Windows have deep, bull-nose ceramic tile sills. Classroom entrances retain original wood doors and transoms. Some classrooms retain

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original blackboards and cork boards, while others have non-historic dry-erase white boards. In either case, the wood chalkboard trim and the integral terrazzo chalk rails are extant in these locations.

The west wing contains the library on the first floor and the auditorium on the second and third floors. The space below the auditorium was renovated to accommodate the library in the 1970s.<sup>2</sup> Finishes include wood veneer paneling on the walls, drop ceilings with lay-in tile, and carpeted floors. Wood veneer and mirrors encase the concrete structural posts. The auditorium retains its original configuration and its historic furnishings and finishes. The plaster walls have engaged pilasters with ornate capitals. The ceiling has wide crown molding and painted box beams. The stage is at the north end of the auditorium. Opposite the stage a balcony projects into the room from the south wall. The auditorium retains original chandeliers, wall sconces, and wood seats.

The center wing contains two two-story spaces that historically functioned as the girls' and boys' gymnasiums. The east space retains its original configuration as a gymnasium with a raised gallery of wood bleachers. The west space has been subdivided into two rooms. The one-story rectangular block at the north end of the center wing housed the swimming pool. This room has buff brick walls, terrazzo floors, and steel beams. The pool itself, with its original terrazzo stairs and black and white tile walls, is extant. A sheetrock wall divides the room and the empty pool into two spaces. The floor of the pool's deep end was leveled with concrete and currently houses two boilers. The shallow end received a plywood floor; it is used for storage.

The first floor of the east wing contains two long, narrow spaces. The east space houses the cafeteria and the kitchen. The room has exposed brick walls, a linoleum floor, and a suspended grid ceiling with lay-in tiles. The west space contains a large vocational classroom. It has exposed concrete posts and ceiling, plaster walls and linoleum floor. The north end wall is painted brick with a ceramic tile wainscoting. The second and third floors of the east wing have double-loaded corridors flanked by classrooms. The classrooms on the second floor have the same finishes and features as the classrooms in the south block. The classrooms on the third floor have plaster ceilings, terrazzo floors, and glazed ceramic tile wainscoting. Originally, the rooms on the east side of the corridor were used for domestic science classes while those on the west side of the corridor housed the lunch room and kitchen. The lunch room and kitchen historically occupied the entire west side of the east wing. The space has since been partitioned for classrooms.

The bathrooms are also substantially intact, having received only minor modifications to improve accessibility and some new fixtures. They generally retain their original configurations as well as terrazzo floors, wainscoting, and stall partitions.

<sup>2</sup> According to historic floor plans the library was originally adjacent to the principal's office on the second floor.

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The 1939 gymnasium is accessible through narrow secondary corridors on the first floor and two formal entrances on the north elevation. The one-story entry vestibules and lobbies have simple Art Deco details. The floors are terrazzo, the lower walls are painted brick, and the upper walls and ceiling are plaster. The hallway connecting the two lobbies retains no original finishes. Simple geometric brick ornament is found above these interior openings. The exterior doorways, however, are shallow, pointed arches in the Collegiate Gothic style employed on the exterior.

The rectangular gymnasium has wood floors and exposed steel roof trusses. Raised galleries flank the gymnasium floor on the east and west sides. The east gallery contains concrete bleachers with wood auditorium-style seats with decorative Art Deco end plates. The west gallery has only concrete bleachers. Locker rooms and coaches offices are in the basement beneath the galleries.

**INTEGRITY**

The Independence Junior High School retains integrity of location, setting, design, feeling, and association. The replacement of windows and exterior doors and the alteration of some interior spaces have partially compromised integrity of materials and workmanship. However, according to the registration requirements set forth in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Historic Public Schools of Kansas," these alterations do not automatically render the property ineligible for register listing. Significantly, the original masonry door and window openings were not altered and most interior finishes are extant. The building clearly communicates its historic function as a public high school and reflects the attributes of the City High School Property Subtype described in Section F of the MPDF. The Independence Junior High School was constructed to educate residents of the City of Independence (unlike earlier county schools), and it devoted space specifically to manual and vocational training. These elements are character-defining features of City Schools and Progressive Era high schools, respectively. The massing, plan, and configuration, along with the application of Collegiate Gothic stylistic features to a symmetrical brick box also exemplify the City High School Property Subtype. The building currently remains in use as a middle school for the children of Independence.

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**SUMMARY**

The Independence Junior High School at 300 West Locust Street, Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas is locally significant under National Register Criterion A for the area of EDUCATION and under Criterion C for the area of ARCHITECTURE. As defined in the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) "Historic Public Schools of Kansas," the Independence Junior High School possesses the distinct characteristics of a City School, specifically the City High School Subtype. A City School is a public school constructed for a city of the first or second class, meaning the population is greater than 2,000.<sup>3</sup> Following Progressive Era reforms, the Junior High School emerged in the 1920s as a transitional institution where grade school students could prepare for the more specialized Senior High School instruction. To that end, a City Junior High School was often designed with the same educational standards as those applied to a City High School, such as the importance of specialized facilities for science and domestic science, manual and vocational training, as well as superior physical education facilities, such as the gymnasium and swimming pool. Other aspects of the City Schools property type expressed by the Independence Junior High School are its location near the center of town occupying a full city block and its large auditorium designed to accommodate public gatherings as well as school-related functions.

The Independence Junior High School meets all of the registration requirements presented in the MPDF for its property type. It was constructed as a public school in the state of Kansas between 1884 and 1955. It remains in its original location within the primarily residential neighborhood in which it was constructed. The building also retains its massing, exterior form, roof form, original primary building materials, and original ornamentation and detailing. While the windows and many of the exterior doors were replaced, often to meet modern life safety codes, the original pattern of fenestration and openings remains intact. The building continues to function as a public school, which has required few alterations to the original configuration of interior spaces. Specifically, the classroom-flanked corridors, the auditorium, and the gymnasium are intact. Many of the interior finishes are also extant, most notably the terra cotta corridor floors and the integral terra cotta chalk trays in the classrooms.

While architectural style is not necessarily a defining feature of Kansas School buildings, the Collegiate Gothic architecture of the Independence Junior High School is a strong visual clue linking the building to the Progressive Era of City School building, which adhered to architectural trends more often than other property types. At these schools formal stylistic features are typically applied to rectangular brick structures, whose only architectural expression is a symmetrical façade and a formal central entrance. The Independence School District contracted the architectural firm N. S. Spencer and Sons of Chicago to design the new Junior High School in 1923. Prominent Kansas school architect, Thomas W. Williamson of Topeka, designed the gymnasium addition in 1939

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<sup>3</sup> According to Wikipedia, referencing the US Census Bureau, the population of Independence in 1920 was 11,920. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence,\\_Kansas](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Independence,_Kansas) Accessed 12 August 2009.

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as a Public Works Administration project. The period of significance for the Independence Junior High School is 1923 to 1959. This period begins with the date of construction and ends with the fifty-year closing date for periods of significance where activities begun historically continue to have importance but no more-specific date can be defined.

**ELABORATION**

Independence experienced a period of rapid population growth in the early twentieth century, during which time new grade schools were built to educate the city's children. Between 1902 and 1907 the Independence School District constructed five new two-story schools with eight classrooms in each. Older students were educated at the Montgomery County High School, a three-story Romanesque building erected near downtown Independence in 1898.<sup>4</sup>

Beginning in the fall of 1919, the Independence School District held public meetings to discuss the construction of a new junior high school. A small pamphlet entitled *The New School Plant* was published to support this effort. The project carried a significant \$300,000 price tag. The pamphlet explained that the newest schools in town were over ten years old and were constructed before the city's population boom. This growth had resulted in crowded classrooms; citywide there were up to 600 students in each grade level.<sup>5</sup> Advocates argued that a new junior high school offered many advantages. Besides reducing classroom crowding, a junior high would provide a central location for educating older students. They noted that Independence was the only sizable town in Kansas that did not operate its schools on the 6+6 plan, which divided schools into six elementary grades and six secondary grades (three in a junior high school and three in a high school).<sup>6</sup>

The school bond issue that passed in 1921 also included a provision to construct a new elementary school in the northern part of town as a means of securing support from voters in that ward.<sup>7</sup> Construction of the Independence Junior High School began none too soon. By 1922 the high school was also experiencing overly crowded classrooms. Some of the 772 high school students that year, presumably the younger students, were sent to Lincoln grade school to relieve the conditions.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Warren A. Culp, Sr., "Independence District #5, 1870-1965, Township 32, Range 15 & 16 E," *Montgomery County, Kansas Grade Schools*, Book 1, Vol. 1, [1969], np.

<sup>5</sup> *The New School Plant*, [1919], Independence Public Library, vertical file – School History; Sherwood, 62-63.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, 62-63.

<sup>7</sup> Montgomery County High School, Independence, Kansas, Twelfth Annual Catalog, 1911, General Information, n.p.

<sup>8</sup> Leon A. Sherwood, Sr., *Official Centennial History: Independence, Kansas*, (Independence, Kansas: Independence Centennial, Inc., 1970), 67.

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In September 1921 the School Board selected as the site for the new Junior High School the block immediately east of the County High School. Bounded by 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, Locust and Pine Streets, this parcel had been the property of the J.H. Pugh Family since 1870.<sup>9</sup> The two-story house standing there had replaced the family's original one-story cabin. It was not the first time the Pugh's land was disturbed by civic activities. In 1898 a strip of land running east-west was condemned to create Pine Street.<sup>10</sup>

Available records include no discussion about the selection of an architect for the project, but the original plans identify Chicagoan N.S. Spencer and Sons as the building architect.<sup>11</sup> The first bids for construction were received in December 1921 and were deemed too high. Following a rebid, the contract was awarded to Brewster Brothers for \$357,047.32. An article published during construction described the building as "designed in accordance with the newest educational ideas." A foundation of Carthage limestone supported dark brick walls ornamented with terra cotta trim. Steam tunnels in the basement connected to the high school power plant across 10<sup>th</sup> Street. The ground floor and third floor housed vocational and prevocational activities, while the second floor held administrative offices, the library, a nurse's office, and classrooms.<sup>12</sup>

The Independence Junior High School opened in September 1923 to great fanfare. In a series of front page articles, the *Independence Daily Reporter* lauded the new school as "the best of its kind west of the Mississippi."<sup>13</sup> Each article highlighted a different aspect of the wonderful new facility. "Details in the Junior High Building are Fully Covered," read one headline, "Nothing has been spared." The article described hammered bronze light fixtures; separate thermostats in each classroom; and the gray, white and blue color scheme. Vertical air shafts vented fresh air through the student lockers on each floor. The wall surface was reportedly too sturdy to mar with carved graffiti, and solid chalk rails below each black board would minimize the accumulation of dust and dirt.<sup>14</sup> Other articles described the auditorium, the athletic facilities, the cafeteria, and the manual and domestic arts classrooms. Residents were invited to tour the building during an open house before classes started.

<sup>9</sup> J.H. Pugh was an Ohioan who came to Kansas in 1869 after serving in the Quartermaster's Department during the Civil War. He settled in Independence in 1870, around the time that he married Josephine Knowles from Mapleton, Kansas. He opened the town's first pharmacy and later served three terms as Alderman. William G. Cutler, *History of the State of Kansas*, Montgomery County, Biographical Sketches (O'Connor - Roediger), (Chicago: A. T. Andreas, 1883), Kansas Collection Books, Accessed 20 August 2009, [http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/montgomery/montgomery-co-p7.html#BIOGRAPHICAL\\_SKETCHES\\_OCONNOR-ROEDIGER](http://www.kancoll.org/books/cutler/montgomery/montgomery-co-p7.html#BIOGRAPHICAL_SKETCHES_OCONNOR-ROEDIGER).

<sup>10</sup> Sherwood, 66.

<sup>11</sup> No other information was found about N.S. Spencer and Son. The MPDF mistakenly attributes the design to Topeka architect Thomas Williamson, who designed the 1939 PWA school projects in Independences, including the gymnasium addition to the Junior High School.

<sup>12</sup> "Junior High School Begins Operation Next Fall." No other information was found about the firm N.S. Spencer and Son.

<sup>13</sup> "New Junior High Building is a Big Advertising Asset," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 3 September 1923, 1.

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The 1000-seat auditorium was designed to host community events as well as school performances. It had "perfect acoustics and visuals" (sightlines) and custom made seats with the school's monogram in the end plate. Two dressing rooms flanked the stage, which measured 22-feet by 36-feet. A rope-and-pulley system operated the curtains across its front. At the rear of the balcony was a fireproof film projection booth.<sup>15</sup>

The new "college-size" swimming pool and pair of gymnasiums (one for boys and one for girls) were considered to be the "best in the state" and highlighted the attention being newly paid to school athletics. The tile-lined pool featured a special chlorine sterilization system. Each gym had a gallery for visitors to watch sporting events. The girls' locker room featured 56 individual dressing rooms, rather than an open changing area.<sup>16</sup>

New facilities for vocational training were very important to the school. These resources not only provided technical training, but also offered work-study opportunities that helped some children stay in school. Food in the cafeteria, for instance, was prepared by the domestic science classes using hotel-grade equipment under the supervision of kitchen staff. They served "good clean wholesome food, scientifically prepared" and at cost. One hundred twenty diners could sit at the cafeteria's mahogany tables. A model three-room apartment, fully outfitted with furniture and chandeliers, helped girls learn their homemaking skills.<sup>17</sup>

Most interesting, was an article entitled, "New Junior High Building is a Big Advertising Asset." In this article the *Daily Reporter* lauds the value of the school in promoting economic development in Independence. The paper describes the new school as a million-dollar building. Not only had the community saved over \$400,000 simply by virtue of its location, but it was a "municipal gold mine" that could be used when publicizing the assets of the community. Concluded the reporter, "Let's advertise it so the world may know."<sup>18</sup>

Seventeen years later, toward the end of the Great Depression, the Independence School District used a Public Works Administration grant to construct a new physical education building at the Junior High. The facility, designed by architect Thomas Williamson of Topeka, was described as "a rich gift to the youth of Independence" when it opened in December 1939. The 72 by 108-foot addition housed a 50 by 90-foot basketball court flanked by bleachers with a seating capacity of 1,600. Locker rooms were located below the bleachers. The facility also

<sup>14</sup> "Details in Junior High Building Are Fully Covered," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 4 September 1923, 1.

<sup>15</sup> "New Junior High Auditorium Will Seat a Thousand," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 8 September 1923, 1.

<sup>16</sup> "Swimming Pool and Gymnasium in Junior High," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 7 September 1923, 1.

<sup>17</sup> "Cafeteria Will Be Feature in Junior High," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 5 September 1923, 1; "Model Apartment House is Found in Junior High," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 6 September 1923, 1.

<sup>18</sup> "New Junior High Building is a Big Advertising Asset," *Independence Daily Reporter*, 3 September 1923, 1.

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included a "corrective room" where handicapped students could receive physical therapy.<sup>19</sup> The project cost \$61,222.

**CONCLUSION**

There have been few major changes to the Independence Junior High School since then, although the school has continued to evolve to meet modern educational needs and standards. Many of the domestic science rooms and the original cafeteria have been converted into classrooms. Some rooms have also been partitioned to accommodate additional classroom space. However, the qualities that made the school an exemplary illustration of Progressive-Era design and the City High School property type remain intact and continue to imbue the building with a rich legacy of education.

*Discussion of proposed plans?*

<sup>19</sup> *Independence Daily Reporter*, 30 December 1939, special section for new schools.

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**PHOTOGRAPHIC INFORMATION**

**Photographer:** Brad Finch  
F-Stop Photography  
Kansas City, Missouri

**Date of Photographs:** July 2009

*Digital images submitted with nomination on CD-ROM*

Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
1.	South and West elevations	NE
2.	North and East elevations	SW
3.	North elevation	S
4.	West elevation	E
5.	Main (South) entrance	N
6.	North entrance to 1939 Gymnasium	S
7.	Entry stair	NW
8.	First floor corridor (typical)	E
9.	Classroom door – first floor (typical)	S
10.	Secondary stair – first floor	E
11.	Second floor classroom (typical)	NW
12.	Third floor classroom	N
13.	Third floor classroom	NE
14.	Terrazzo chalk rail – first floor (typical)	S
15.	Second floor office	NW
16.	Auditorium	SW
17.	Auditorium stage	NW
18.	Auditorium light fixture	N
19.	1923 Girls' Gymnasium	N

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Photograph Number	Description	Camera View
20.	Former swimming pool	NW
21.	1939 Gymnasium	SE
22.	1939 Gymnasium seat detail	S

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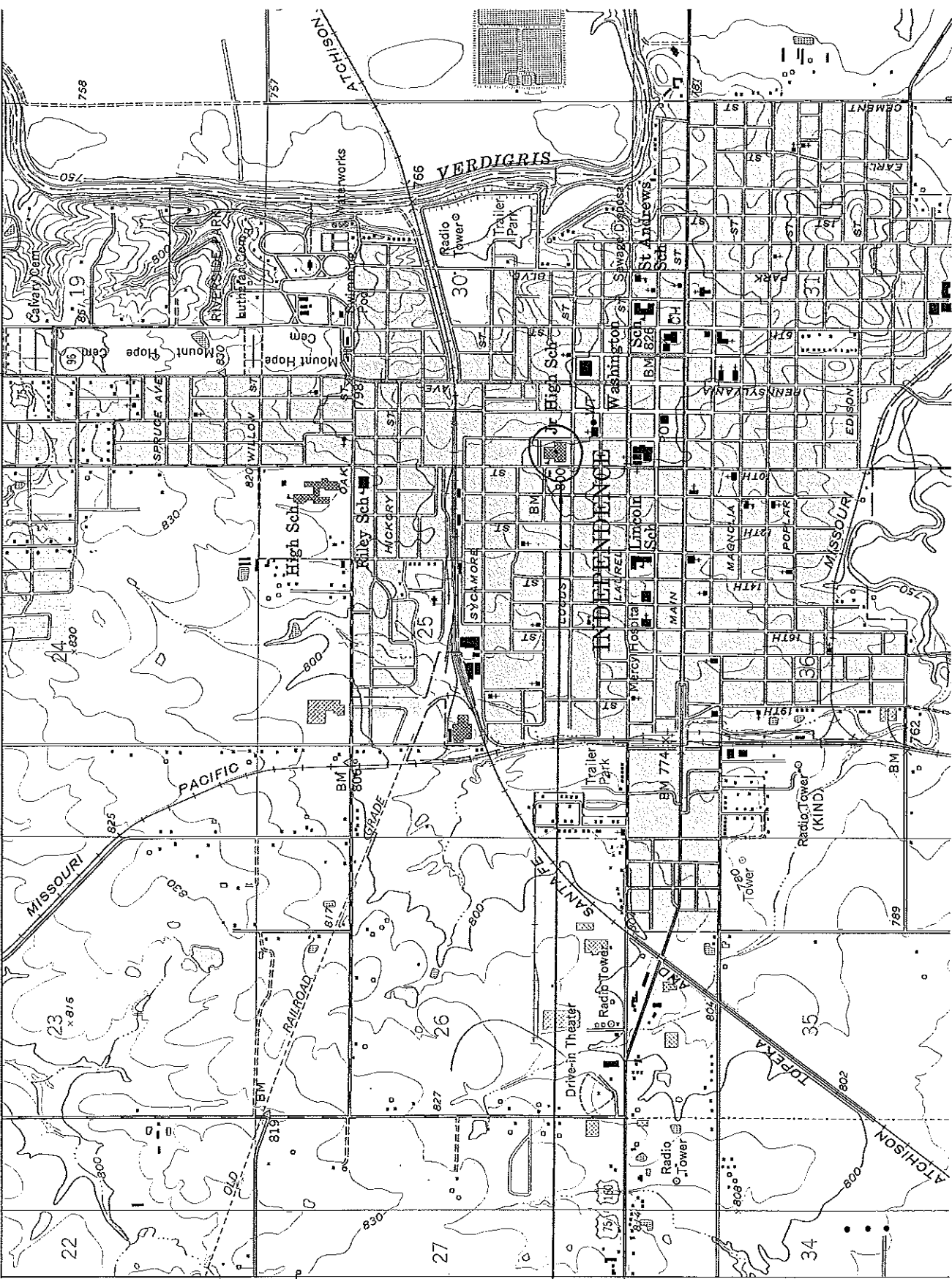
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